

TABLE 1
MORPHOMETRIC MEASUREMENTS OF
THE SPECIMEN FROM BOTEJHARI VILLAGE

Body Parts	Measurements (cm)
Total Body Length	54.5
Length of Hind Legs	14.00
Length of Fore Legs	10.5
Tail Length	17.5
Length of Skull	6.8
Length of Whiskers	3.5
Length of Upper jaw = 3.8 cm	Length of lower jaw = 4.5 cm
Canine length = 0.8 cm	Canine length = 0.6 cm
Dental configuration = $\frac{I C P M}{3 1 1 1}$	Dental configuration = $\frac{I C P M}{3 1 1 2}$

comm.) and one dead specimen was reported from Udaipur (Raza, 1994). It has also been reported from Anaimalai hills in Western Ghats (Mudappa pers. comm.) and Central Kerala (Kumar, pers. comm). During my field work from April 1994 to July 1997, this lesser cat was seen thrice (twice dead and once alive), in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra.

On April 24, 1995, a dead specimen of this cat was found at a distance of 800 m from

Botejhari village inside the Tiger Reserve. Some morphometric measurements were taken from this specimen (Table 1). Dental configuration and measurement of jaws were also recorded (Table 1). In the upper jaw, the molars were fused together. Upper canines were longer than the lower canines.

On June 13, 1995, one individual was sighted. This sighting was also close to human habitation, 1.2 km from the village of Jamni. On January 18, 1996 another dead specimen was found close to a village, Moharli inside the Tiger Reserve.

It is interesting to note that all the sightings of dead and live individuals were very close to human habitation. Still not much is known about the status of this lesser cat.

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YOGESH DUBEY
Wildlife Institute of India
P.O. Box # 18,
Chandrabani,
Dehra Dun 248 001
Uttar Pradesh.

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4. THE GAUR *BOS GAURUS* IN DIBANG VALLEY DISTRICT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

(With a text figure)

The gaur *Bos gaurus* H. Smith is a very poorly documented species in northeastern India, although it is widely distributed in the region. Except for a survey in north Bengal (Bhattacharyya *et al.*, 1997) no specific work of any significance solely for this bovine has been

taken up in the region. I report here of the past and present status of the species in the entire Dibang Valley dist., (27°59'-29°29'N, 95°13'-96°36' E), Arunachal Pradesh as ascertained during field visits between 1992 and 1994. Dibang Valley dist. covers part of Mishmi Hills

as well as the plains of the Dibang river.

Till the early 1970s, the gaur was widespread all over the foothills and lower areas of Dibang Valley dist. starting from above Nizamghat to the inter-state border with Assam, mostly in the forests in the foothills and plains, and *chaponi* (riverine islets and tracts) of the Dibang, Deopani and the Sessleri rivers. From the late 1970s, new settlements have started to come up in many of the plain areas, especially between Roing and Santipur, and in Bomjir and Bijari, destroying the forest areas. Gradually, the logging increased in the foothills also and the number of timber-based industries has also increased in places like Roing, Bijari, Bomjir, Bolung and other areas. These factors, along with local growth of population have resulted in degradation and alteration of the habitat. Easy availability of fire arms has resulted in increase in poaching for meat as the local tribes, both the Adis and Idu Mishmi, relish it. The gaur population has declined drastically.

At present, small populations occur in the lower areas of Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, foothills above Dambuk, the lowland forest and grassland in Dibang Reserved Forest (RF), and Sirkee proposed RF. From Dibang RF, a few move down to Amarpur area of Sadiya in Tinsukia dist. (Assam), especially in winter (Choudhury, 1994, 1998). However, this movement has become irregular due to clearing of grassland for agriculture in Amarpur area. It may be mentioned here that part of Amarpur was inside Dibru-Saikhowa Wildlife Sanctuary till 1995 (excluded at the time of final notification). In Dibang Valley dist., the gaur occurs as far north as 28°30'N (approx.), which is also the northernmost limit of the world distribution of the species.

It is difficult to make an accurate population estimate as the animals are extremely shy due to regular persecution and are rather thinly distributed. However, after visiting all the known and potential areas and interviewing local hunters, graziers of the *khutis* and other tribal

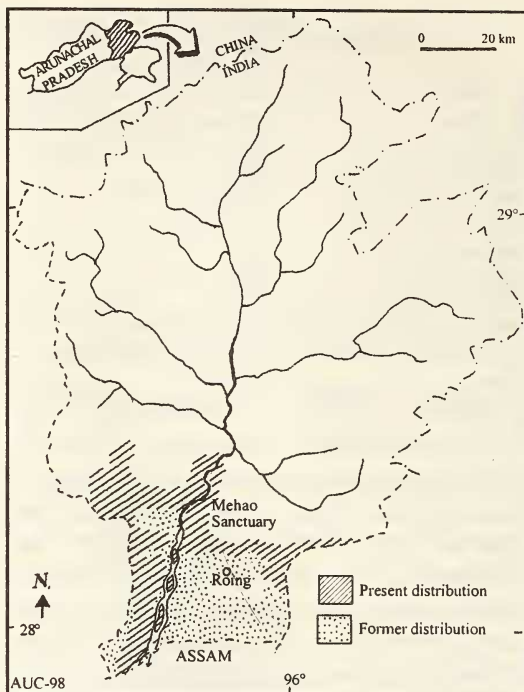


Fig. 1: Distribution of gaur in Dibang Valley dist.

villagers, it can be generally estimated that there are less than 70 gaurs in the eastern areas of the Dibang river, mostly in Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary. In Dibang RF and in the foothills towards north and west of Dambuk, 30 to 60 animals occur. The total habitat available for the species in the district is more than 250 sq. km (Fig.1).

The presence of domestic buffaloes in the *khutis*, especially in the lower reaches of the Dibang river, poses problems like the potential danger of spread of diseases like anthrax, foot and mouth and rinderpest.

While habitat destruction continues to be a threat, it is poaching with guns and rifles that is taking its toll on the gaurs and unless conservation measures are taken, the future of these animals is bleak. Parts of Dibang RF, Kerim RF and Sirkee proposed RF (totalling 202 sq. km.) have been recommended for a national park

for its importance as the habitat of the Bengal florican *Eupodotis bengalensis*, white-winged wood duck *Cairina scutulata*, tiger *Panthera tigris*, elephant *Elephas maximus*, wild buffalo *Bubalus arnee* and as an important flyway of migratory waterfowl including the common crane *Grus grus* (Choudhury, 1996). This proposed protected area, along with the existing Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, will help protect the

majority of the gaur population of Dibang Valley. The protection measures in Mehao, however, need to be strengthened as they are inadequate at present.

October 27, 1998 ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY
Rhino Foundation for Nature in NE India,
c/o Assam Co. Ltd.
Bamunimaidan, Guwahati 781 021, Assam.

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5. LESSER FRIGATE BIRD, *FREGATA MINOR ALDABRENSIS* MATHEWS
ON THE KERALA COAST

The lesser frigate bird breeds on the Indian Ocean Island, Aldabra (10° S lat. 45° E long. approx.) and on Seychelles (5° S lat. 55° E long). It is reported as a rare straggler during the monsoon in India (Ali and Ripley, 1968 HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Vol. I p. 48). The BNHS collection has a male bird, collected on 24.vi.1927 by L.A. Lampard, from Quilon, Kerala. There are two female specimens from Sri Lanka, one in the Colombo Museum and the other in the British Museum.

On August 9, 1997 one bird was collected (found exhausted, died later) from Kannur in Kerala by C. Sashikumar and sent to BNHS. It is an adult female.

Measurement of the specimens in mm:

	Wing	Bill from feathers	Middle toe	Tail
Male	520 (IH 585-603)	100.5 116-130	50, 50.5 48-57	388 392-410
Female	620 (IH 605-621)	110 130-150	52.5, 53.5 48-57	435 395-430

October 27, 1997 SARASWATHY UNNITHAN
Bombay Natural History Society,
Hornbill House, S.B. Singh Road,
Mumbai 400 023.

6. POND HERON IN PIN VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, SPITI, HIMACHAL PRADESH

The Indian pond heron or paddy bird (*Ardeola grayii grayii* Sykes) has been recorded

up to an altitude of 2150 m in the Nilgiris, and to about 1500 m in Kashmir and Nepal (Ali and